

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 BONN 21125 01 OF 04 161615Z
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INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BONN 21125

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SUBJ: GERMAN PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD NUCLEAR POWER

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PAGE 02 BONN 21125 01 OF 04 161615Z

REF: (A) STUTTGART 1102, 1975; (B) BONN 19265;
(C) BONN 5460; (D) BONN 19187; (E) BONN 19726;
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1. SUMMARY: THE NUCLEAR ENERGY PICTURE IN THE FRG

HAS CHANGED STRIKINGLY SINCE THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER. VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST CONSTRUCTION OF THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT AT BROKDORF STIMULATED PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL REACTION WHICH ASSURES THAT THE ORIGINAL AMBITIOUS NATIONAL NUCLEAR ENERGY GOAL (1985: 45-50,000 MWE) CAN NEVER BE ACHIEVED. THE PUBLIC OUTCRY WAS PROBABLY ONE FACTOR LEADING TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE IMPENDING SHORTFALL IN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONSTRUCTION AND A FORMAL REDUCTION IN THE 1985 PROGNOSIS TO 35-38,000 EMW. EVEN THIS REDUCED TARGET, A CURTAILMENT OF ROUGHLY 20 PERCENT, SEEMS DUBIOUS IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE OF OPINION. SURPRISINGLY, PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR POWER--AT LEAST AS MEASURED BY THE POLLS -- REMAINS AT 75 PERCENT. HOWEVER, SUPPORT FOR THE ESSENTIALLY ANTI-NUCLEAR CITIZENS' INITIATIVES STANDS AT 58 PERCENT AND MEDIA COMMENT IS INCREASINGLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS. RESPONSES FROM THE POLITICAL SECTOR ENDORSING INCREASED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE NUCLEAR DEBATE ADDS ANOTHER NEW FACTOR WITH A POTENTIALLY NEGATIVE IMPACT OF A MAGNITUDE YET DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE. END SUMMARY.

2. INTRODUCTION:

THE ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE GERMAN PUBLIC TOWARD NUCLEAR POWER IS A DIFFICULT TASK AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE USUAL CRITERIA ARE NON-AVAILABLE OR IN CONFLICT. YET IT IS CLEAR THAT DRAMATIC RECENT INCIDENTS HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED THE PROBABLE COURSE OF EVENTS. IN THE FRG, THERE HAVE BEEN NO UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BONN 21125 01 OF 04 161615Z

"NUCLEAR REFERENDA". IN FACT, AS NOTED IN REF B, THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AN INFORMAL AGREEMENT AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO KEEP THIS ISSUE OUT OF THE CAMPAIGN DEBATE. OTHER ESTABLISHED TECHNIQUES FOR MEASURING THE PUBLIC'S VIEWPOINTS -- POLLS, THE ACTIVITIES OF CITIZENS' GROUPS, MEDIA COMMENT AND RESPONSES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE GOVERNMENT -- PROVIDE OFTEN CONTRADICTORY GUIDANCE. EACH OF THESE FACTORS WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS.

3. THE ATTITUDES OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TOWARD NUCLEAR ENERGY -- THE POLLS:

DESPITE THE MASSIVE PROTEST AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT AT WHYL (REF A) AND THE EVEN MORE VIOLENT AND DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLANT AT BROKDORF (REF B), THE ATTITUDES OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC--AS MEASURED BY THE POLLS--HAVE

NOT CHANGED SUBSTANTIALLY (REF C). A CONFIDENTIAL
POLL CONDUCTED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ELECTRIC
UTILITIES SHOWS THAT ONLY ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF THE
GERMAN PUBLIC ARE INTERESTED IN THE PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR
ENERGY. THIS SURVEY ALSO REVEALED THAT OVER 60 PER-
CENT OF THE PEOPLE DESIRE MORE AND BETTER
INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT ALTHOUGH BOTH UTILITIES

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PAGE 01 BONN 21125 02 OF 04 161620Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 04 BONN 21125

AND THE FRG HAVE INFORMATION PROGRAMS. POLLS TAKEN IN 1975 AND IN 1976 SHOW THAT 75 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE SUPPORT NUCLEAR POWER AND THAT THIS PERCENTAGE HAS REMAINED ESSENTIALLY CONSTANT. HOWEVER, PUBLIC
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PAGE 02 BONN 21125 02 OF 04 161620Z

OPPOSITION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN THE "NEIGHBORHOOD" IS INCREASING. IN 1975, 39 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED SUCH AN INSTALLATION, WHILE 29 PERCENT WOULD HAVE OPPOSED. IN 1976, THIS POSITIVE MARGIN HAD DISAPPEARED (35 PERCENT VS 36 PERCENT) AND HALF OF THOSE OPPOSING WOULD "ACTIVELY" OPPOSE. ALTHOUGH, POLLS INDICATE STRONG SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR POWER, SUPPORT FOR CITIZENS' INITIATIVES HAVE ALSO INCREASED. FIFTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE SUPPORT THESE (ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE) INTERVENTIONS INTO THE NUCLEAR POWER DEBATE AND HALF OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE INFLUENCE OF THE PUBLIC IN THE LICENSING PROCESS FOR NUCLEAR PLANTS SHOULD BE INCREASED.

4. PUBLIC OPPOSITION -- THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVES:

A. THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE NUCLEAR POWER REACTOR AT BROKDORF DRAMATICALLY ILLUSTRATE THAT THE OPPOSITION AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER HAS BECOME VERY WELL ORGANIZED AND IS EVEN WILLING TO USE FORCE TO HALT ITS FURTHER EXPANSION, UNLESS THEIR OBJECTIONS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT "ADEQUATELY," I.E. EARLIER IN THE DECISION PROCESS. THE MOST RECENT INCIDENTS HIGHLIGHT TWO NEW PHENOMENA:

1. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVES ARE BEING SUPPORTED BY AN INCREASING NUMBER OF LOCAL CITIZENS OF THE AREA WHERE THE NUCLEAR FACILITY IS TO BE CONSTRUCTED, REGARDLESS OF STRONGLY-CONFLICTING POLITICAL VIEWS.

2. THE DISCUSSION ABOUT NUCLEAR ENERGY HAS BECOME ONLY PART OF A FAR-REACHING DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF A STEADILY
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PAGE 03 BONN 21125 02 OF 04 161620Z

INCREASING INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CITIZEN.

THE LAST POINT, IN PARTICULAR, INDICATES THAT THE PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR ENERGY HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A POLITICAL ISSUE IN WHICH SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTS ARE SUBMERGED. CITIZENS' GROUPS ASK WHETHER THE NUCLEAR ENERGY PART OF THE NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM DOES NOT THREATEN "DEMOCRATIC VALUES." THE FEDERAL UNION OF CITIZENS' INITIATIVES (BBU) CONSIDERS THE INTRUSIVE CHARACTER OF NUCLEAR ENERGY TO BE ITS FATAL WEAKNESS (SEE REF C, PARA 2B).

B. OPPOSITION TO NUCLEAR ENERGY HWZ BECOME MORE FBV AND VIOLENT. OFFICIALS FEAR THAT OPPOSITION AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GERMAN INTEGRATED NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE CENTER, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN DURING THE NEXT YEAR, WILL BE EVEN MORE VIOLENT THAN THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST BROKDORF BECAUSE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS REPROCESSING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTER IS A NECESSARY PRE-REQUISITE FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN THE FRG (SEE REF. D).

C. IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE STIMULATED AND MANAGED BY A RADICAL LEFTIST MINORITY TRYING TO USE THIS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE PUBLIC FOR DISRUPTIVE PURPOSES. HOWEVER, ALL OFFICIAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE CITIZENS' GROUPS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR GOALS ARE NOT THE SAME AS THOSE OF THE RADICAL LEFT. THE BBU SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD REFRAIN FROM ANY COOPERATION WITH SUCH GROUPS.

5. MEDIA COVERAGE:

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PAGE 04 BONN 21125 02 OF 04 161620Z

FOR THE FIRST TIME MASS MEDIA BEGAN TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEMS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY AND GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO THE INCIDENTS AT BROKDORF. THE TONE OF THE COMMENTS WAS USUALLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS. THE CONSENSUS SEEMED TO BE THAT THE LARGE NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS, MAINLY THE MANAGEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE NUCLEAR WASTES, DEMANDED A MORATORIUM

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 01 BONN 21125 03 OF 04 161625Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
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UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 04 BONN 21125

ON THE EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY TO PROVIDE TIME FOR
A RECONSIDERATION OF THE WHOLE NATIONAL ENERGY PRO-
GRAM. OTHER PRESS COMMENT NOTED THAT A PUBLIC DISCUS-
SION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE EARLIER BECAUSE
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 BONN 21125 03 OF 04 161625Z

MANY OF THE CURRENT PROBLEMS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANTICI-
PATED.

6. POLITICAL REACTION:

INITIAL REACTIONS FROM THE POLITICAL SECTOR WERE CHARACTERIZED BY SOME IRRITATION AND CONFUSION BECAUSE NUCLEAR ENERGY HAD NEVER BEFORE BEEN CONSIDERED A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE. ALL PARTIES HAD DISPLAYED RARE HARMONY DURING THE VARIOUS PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES AT WHICH THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED (SEE REF C, PARA 4). SUBSEQUENTLY THE CDU/CSU PARTIES CALLED FOR AN UNALTERED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FEDERAL ENERGY PROGRAM WHICH FORESAW 45,000 MWE BY 1985. THE GOVERNMENT COALITION TOOK A MORE CRITICAL POSITION. IN ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION, THE MINORITY PARTNER (FDP) PASSED A RESOLUTION WHICH URGES THE FDP MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW NON-NUCLEAR ENERGY SOURCES AND TO PREVAIL UPON THE AUTHORITIES NOT TO ISSUE ANY NEW OPERATING OR CONSTRUCTION LICENSES FOR NUCLEAR FACILITIES UNTIL THE SAFE MANAGEMENT OF NUCLEAR WASTES HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED (SEE REF. E). THE MAJOR COALITION PARTNER (SPD) ANNOUNCED AN EXPERT CONFERENCE ON ENERGY QUESTIONS TO DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS. THE STATE SECTION OF THE SPD PARTY IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN (LOCATION OF THE BROCKDORF PLANT) PROPOSED A THREE-YEAR MORATORIUM ON THE FURTHER EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY.

7. GOVERNMENT REACTIONS:

THE INTENSIFIED DISCUSSION ABOUT NUCLEAR ENERGY LED TO SOME DIRECT REACTIONS FROM THE FEDERAL MINISTRIES INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENERGY PROGRAM. THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS ANNOUNCED THAT, DUE TO THE DECREASED DEMAND FOR

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PAGE 03 BONN 21125 03 OF 04 161625Z

ENERGY, THE ORIGINAL 1985 GOAL OF 45,000 MWE OF INSTALLED NUCLEAR CAPACITY COULD BE CUT DOWN TO 35,000 - 38,000 MWE. THE MINISTER FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY EXPLAINED THAT THIS REDUCTION WOULD MEAN THAT, BY 1985, 15 PERCENT OF THE PRIMARY ENERGY WOULD BE PRODUCED BY NUCLEAR FACILITIES -- THE ORIGINAL GOAL. HE STATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD PROMOTE EFFORTS TO HARNESS OTHER ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES, ESPECIALLY THE USE OF DOMESTIC COAL, AND APPLY NUCLEAR ENERGY ONLY WHEN NECESSARY. THE MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR TRIED TO MEET THE CRITICISM ABOUT THE UNRESOLVED PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REPEATED ASSURANCES THAT NO NEW LICENSES FOR THE OPERATION NOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WOULD BE ISSUED UNLESS THE ELECTRICITY UTILITIES HAD SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL FOR THE SAFE HANDLING OF SPENT NUCLEAR

FUEL. FURTHERMORE HE REPEATED THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO INCORPORATE IN THE FIFTH AMENDMENT TO THE ATOMIC LAW PROVISIONS FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF "ORGANIZATIONS" IN THE LICENSING PROCESS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FINAL APPROVAL OF A LICENSE SHOULD BE POSTPONED UNTIL ALL INTERVENTIONS HAVE RECEIVED FIRST CONSIDERATION BY THE COURTS, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR ADEQUATE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

8. EMBASSY COMMENT:

A. THE NEW PROPOSALS FOR INTENSIFIED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LICENSING OF NUCLEAR FACILITIES, AND FOR A FUNDAMENTAL DISCUSSION OF THE FEDERAL ENERGY PROGRAM MAKE IT DUBIOUS THAT THE GOALS PROJECTED FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY GENERATING CAPACITY -- EVEN IN THE RECENTLY REDUCED VERSION -- CAN BE ACHIEVED. CERTAINLY THERE WILL BE FURTHER DELAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM. THE FRG COAL INDUSTRY ESTIMATES THAT, AT THE MOST, SOME 30,000 MWE OF NUCLEAR CAPACITY WILL

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 BONN 21125 03 OF 04 161625Z

BE INSTALLED BY 1985. CONSEQUENTLY, THE COALINDUSTRY IS PLANNING TO BUILD POWER PLANTS ON ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE UP THE ANTICIPATED DEFICIT IN THE ENERGY SUPPLY. THE INDUSTRY FEELS ENCOURAGED BECAUSE, IN ITS OPINION, RECENT STUDIES REVEAL THAT THE PRESUMED ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY DO NOT EXIST.

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PAGE 01 BONN 21125 04 OF 04 161638Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
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UNCLAS SECTION 04 OF 04 BONN 21125

B. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT VERY FEW OF
THE RECENT PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL COMMENTS HAVE YET
TOUCHED ON THE IMPACT THAT THE REVISION OF THE 1985
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PAGE 02 BONN 21125 04 OF 04 161638Z

ENERGY GOALS MAY BE EXPECTED TO HAVE ON THE GERMAN
NUCLEAR INDUSTRY. NEWSPAPER SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE
IMPACT OF NEW US NON-PROLIFERATION POLICIES HAVE
ALWAYS HIGHLIGHTED THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES, SHOULD
THE FRG LOSE THE BRAZILIAN ORDER FOR UP TO EIGHT NUC-
LEAR POWER PLANTS AND OTHER NUCLEAR FACILITIES. THERE
HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN SOME PRELIMINARY MEDIA COMMENT
THAT THE GERMAN NUCLEAR INDUSTRY MUST BE STRONGLY
EXPORT ORIENTED BECAUSE THE DOMESTIC MARKET IS TOO
SMALL TO MAINTAIN IT AT AN EFFICIENT LEVEL OF PRODUC-
TION.

C. AS INDICATED BY REF. C, PARA 7, NUCLEAR NON-
PROLIFERATION HAS NEVER BEEN A PUBLIC ISSUE AND HAS
NEVER BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN PUBLIC OPPOSITION
TO NUCLEAR ENERGY. MOST OF THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS HAVE
HIGHLIGHTED THE TOPIC IN SPECULATING ABOUT THE IMPACT
THAT PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER'S POLICIES MAY HAVE ON THE

NUCLEAR EXPORT POLICY OF THE FRG (REF F AND PRIOR).
IN THIS CONTEXT, AND FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, THE DANGER
OF PROLIFERATION HAS AS YET RECEIVED ONLY LOW-KEY
AND DEFENSIVE COMMENT FROM OFFICIAL CIRCLES.
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